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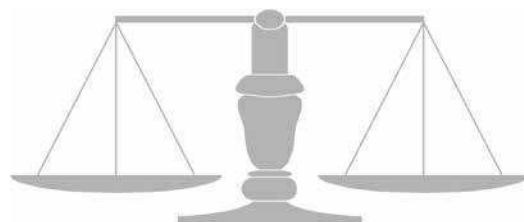
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The Portland Observer

# Parents Call Rap Music Ban Racist

## Portland school bus policy under fire

BY CERVANTE POPE  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A memo sent out to Portland Public Schools bus drivers stipulating that rap music was not appropriate on school buses leaves parents concerned of an underlying racial bias.

"The stations that are deemed inappropriate include any religious, rap music or talk show programs," the March 9 memo from PPS senior director of transportation Teri Brady reads,

leaving only five stations the district feels are safe to play while transporting students.

Of the suitable options, pop stations 103 FM, 106.7 FM and 97.1 FM were at the top of the list, followed by country station 98.7 FM and jazz station 89.1 FM.

A copy of the memo was obtained by Colleen Ryan-Onken, a white parent to a senior at Roosevelt High School, who shared it with fellow parents that also shared her outrage.

"I think it's overtly racist and leaves out two of our major communities in our music choices," Ryan-Onken told the Oregonian.

Ryan-Onken also pointed out

how Latin music isn't even mentioned and how certain topics covered in country songs make it just as offensive as rap can be.

Portland Public Schools spokeswoman Courtney Westling offered a response.

"We regret the way this was communicated. Our intent is to limit student exposure to religious teachings, profanity and violent lyrics," said Westling. "The transportation department will be revising its guidance to bus drivers shortly to be more inclusive of different genres of music."

Exactly when this revision will be happening has not yet been disclosed.

## You Can Now Text 911

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that someone in need would add an emoji or smiley face to their cry for help, Bledsoe says the possibility is more likely than one would think.

"There's a big variety of emoji keyboards in this day and age and

so sometimes people might, with language barriers or translation issues, think that they can translate or give us information where they might not know the word for it," says Bledsoe. "That might be a situation where someone might try to use an emoji and try to communicate information to us. But it

doesn't work, unfortunately, yet, in the 911 sector."

She reiterates being precise with messaging and location details without any multimedia attached because "if someone says 'help' or 'I need help' and then sends us an unhappy face, we won't even see the 'I need help.'"

People are encouraged to always call 911 first (or use relay services or TTY) whenever possible.

## Fixing the Taps

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

until all school kitchen faucets are deemed safe.

Vegetables like lettuce and brussel sprouts will come to school kitchens prewashed and essentially ready to serve, eliminating the need for faucet-run water.

"We are still evaluating fixtures for lead used for food preparation, but the number one priority is getting our kitchens back in order," says Westling.

She also says that PPS is working with a consultant regarding upgrading kitchen pipe systems with the hopes of having the issue resolved by the next school year.

Grains and starches, such as rice and mashed potatoes, will be cooked using a rotation between vegetable broth, meat broth and outside sourced water. Students with religious or dietary restrictions for food will have vegetarian options made available daily, according to Westling.

Additional problems regarding the District's water lead levels involve school community gardens, which is somewhat addressed in a joint statement released by Portland Public Schools and the Oregon Health Authority.

"The amount of lead delivered to soil through water is quite small compared to the amount of lead

already present at background levels in soil. Other potential sources, such as lead-based paint chips and dust, represent a much more significant contributor to soil lead concentrations," the statement reads.

"In general, garden plants do not absorb significant quantities of lead. However, it is important for people to wash vegetables and hands after gardening to reduce possible exposure to lead in soil, which is the major potential source of lead contamination on produce."

PPS is still discouraging use of community gardens due to spigots containing lead that may have fed water into the gardens. Westling says the District has no intentions to shut down their near 75 community gardens, but that vegetables grown in them will not be used in school kitchens.

Vegetables from schools' community gardens will not be used again until untainted cold water fixtures can be secured to safely wash garden produce.

PPS plans to continue updating concerned parents and the general public through videos, newsletters and posted signage like they have already exercised since the lead issue became such a hot topic.

Communication on the topic is available in English, Somali, Vietnamese, Russian, Chinese and Spanish, though Westling says interpretation is available for additional languages as well.

"We're really trying to hit people from all angles with communication since not everyone receives information in the same way," Westling says.

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